

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008AE0041-000859
June 5, 2008

Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE APPROVES NVIT'S FIRST DEGREE, JOINT WITH TRU

MERRITT – The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) will offer a bachelor of social work degree jointly with Thompson Rivers University (TRU), the first degree program approved for the Aboriginal-governed institute, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

“We’ve been working to increase the number of Aboriginal students who choose to pursue higher education in B.C.,” said Coell. “Ensuring access to the training and education Aboriginal students want is opening pathways to full participation in B.C.’s future. A bachelor’s degree in social work prepares graduates to be involved in the social policies and programs that shape communities and lives.”

The program builds on a bachelor of social work degree program offered by TRU at NVIT since 1998. The NVIT program has an Aboriginal-centred curriculum and includes courses in Aboriginal life cycles, Aboriginal perspectives on social policy, ethical practice in Aboriginal communities, and cultural immersion. NVIT will begin intake for the program at the Merritt and Vancouver campuses in September. Twenty-five seats are available at each of the campuses.

“The recruitment and retention of Aboriginal social workers is very important to our ministry,” said Tom Christensen, Minister of Children and Family Development. “The new bachelor of social work degree at NVIT augments a similar degree program at UNBC that graduated 10 Aboriginal child protection workers last year.”

“Offering our first degree program in partnership with Thompson Rivers University recognizes our long-standing relationship with TRU,” said NVIT president Casey Sheridan. “Students may now benefit from the Aboriginal-centred programs we offer as they pursue their bachelor’s degree in social work.”

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is British Columbia’s Aboriginal public post-secondary institution offering credentials in fields linked to community, social, economic, land and First Nations self-governance development. Government is supporting NVIT this year with more than \$7 million in operating grants, an increase of almost nine per cent over 2007-08.

Since 2001, the Province has provided more than \$15 million to 272 special projects benefiting over 4,700 Aboriginal students and a \$10-million endowment to the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society for an Aboriginal scholarship program.

- 2 -

By 2010, institutions will have received \$15 million from the Province to help develop gathering places that reflect the cultural characteristics of their Aboriginal students, community and traditions. Government is investing another \$14.9 million to create Aboriginal service plans involving 11 public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities.

-30-

Media Gordon Williams
contact: Communications Director
 250 952-6508
 250 413-7316 cell

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.